

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

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May 27, 2004

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: *Ex Parte Presentation*
WT Docket No. 02-55

Dear Chairman Powell:


The Commission's pending proceeding regarding 800 MHz public safety communications raises critical issues regarding the ability of the nation's first responders to communicate effectively. In just the past few weeks, a variety of prominent officials and organizations have issued reports and statements that further highlight the importance of these issues:

- ***The Council for Excellence in Government, We the People: Homeland Security from the Citizen's Perspective – Report and Recommendations for Action (May 2004).*** This comprehensive report includes a recommendation urging the FCC to “issue a frequency ‘re-banding’ ruling to deal with public safety radio interference. ... This decision is needed to dedicate interference-free radio spectrum to public safety officials. Public safety officials have reported to the FCC more than 1,000 cases of radio interference nationwide in the 800 MHz frequency band. (See www.projectconsensus.org) Everyday, this problem jeopardizes the lives and safety of first responders and the citizens they serve.” (Attachment A at page 23)
- ***Secretary Ridge's Remarks on the Council for Excellence in Government Report (May 25, 2004).*** In these remarks Homeland Department Secretary Tom Ridge states that “[d]uring an emergency situation, effective communication and coordination is an absolute necessity for our nation's first responders,” and emphasizes the importance of interoperable communications among public safety agencies. (Attachment B at page 3.)

- ***9/11 Commission, Staff Statement Regarding Emergency Preparedness and Response (May 18, 2004).*** This staff statement provides a detailed description of the heroic efforts of firefighters and police officers in responding to the attacks on the World Trade Center. It describes the communications difficulties they encountered that day, and underscores the importance of effective radio communications in responding to emergencies. (Attachment C)
- ***Editorial by John Lehman, Member of the 9/11 Commission (The New York Times, May 26, 2004).*** “It is past time that [police officers and firefighters] be provided with the quality of communications support that is taken for granted in the military. In the new age of jihadist terror, our firefighters and police officers need nothing less, and they don’t have it. ... The federal government needs to make new radio frequencies available.” (Attachment D at page 2)

As these reports and statements emphasize, effective public safety communications can save lives and have become even more important since 9/11. As one of the nation’s first responders, I strongly urge the Commission to do its part on this front and issue a decision adopting the Consensus Plan as quickly as possible. Many public safety organizations and officials support the Consensus Plan as the best means of achieving the vital public safety goals in this proceeding. It provides an effective remedy to the serious public safety interference problem and will also provide much-needed additional spectrum for public safety communications.

Sincerely,



Charles L. Werner
Deputy Fire Chief
Charlottesville, VA Fire Department

cc: Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein
Bryan Tramont
Sheryl Wilkerson
Jennifer Manner
Paul Margie
Barry Ohlson
John B. Muleta
John Rogovin